

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 1, Leatherhead 0

A 58th minute goal by Ian Pearson was enough to ensure Wycombe Wanderers' passage into the third round of the Rothmans Isthmian League Cup against Leatherhead at Loakes Park on Tuesday night. The Blues now meet Kingstonian at home in the next round.

As expected, this match was perfectly balanced and followed the same pattern as the earlier meeting between the sides when they drew 0-0 in the league recently at Fetcham Grove. Unfortunately neither were at their best on Tuesday and with two water-tight defences dominating, the entertainment value was only moderate.

We saw only glimpses of Wycombe's top form, probably due to three changes from Saturday's team, while Leatherhead never matched their FA Cup performance at Chelmsford three days earlier.

But Wanderers must be well pleased with the performance of their back four. Alan Phillips had another brilliant game while Keith Mead was as solid as ever and full backs Paul Birdseye and Bob Davies looked sound in defence and enterprising coming forward. Unfortunately neither the midfield nor front men could

'Alex' now a striker

WYCOMBE Wanderers face two of their former team-mates tomorrow (Saturday) when Woking visit Loakes Park in the Rothmans Isthmian League.

Dave Alexander, released by Wycombe in the close season, has made a big impression at Woking and is currently playing up front where he has scored half a dozen goals. Also in the side is Derek Cotterill who joined last season from Wycombe.

Woking are well behind on their league programme due to success in the F.A. Cup. So far they have had three replays in the cup after beating Burgess Hill in the first qualifying round. They overcame Croydon at home after a replay, beat Aveley 4-1 at home after a 1-1 draw and on Tuesday night won at Slough after drawing 0-0 at home.

New players at Kingfield this season include Jim Godfrey from Wealdstone, Steve Hill from Slough and goalkeeper John Overton from Sutton.

Wanderers have only one doubt for tomorrow. Howard Kennedy has 'flu and may not be fit in time, but Peter Cruse, who made his debut on Tuesday, may continue in midfield.

emulate their five star displays.

Perhaps it was the team change that affected the side. Peter Cruse, a recent signing from Hes, came into midfield with John Priestley while Howard Kettleborough returned to the front line at the expense of Dylan Evans. Of the three Priestley was most impressive for his work rate while Cruse had a quiet debut. Kettleborough found Leatherhead centre half Dave Reid a difficult man to beat.

Leatherhead, who had last year's Wycombe full back Ray Eaton in their line up, must be disappointed with this result. They had as much, if not more, of the game but tested John Maskell only twice.

This was mainly due to the superb work by the home defence, but the Tanners approach work always threatened despite the fact that Chris Kelly hung onto the ball far too long. If only Kelly would distribute the ball more often he would be the complete player.

There were precious few goalmouth incidents in the first half but one of Wycombe's closest efforts came from the boot of Tony Horseman, who had a disappointing game. In the 27th minute, Reid brought down Kettleborough on the edge of the box and Horseman's free kick forced John Swannell to fist the ball over the crossbar.

Leatherhead's closest effort of the game came in the 35th minute. Johnny Doyle put Kelly away on the top wing and his low cross beat two defenders inside the box. The ball came out to John Bailey but John Maskell saved his shot at the second attempt.

PENALTY APPEAL

Referee Prevett turned down a strong penalty appeal when Colin Woffinden appeared to handle the ball but Wycombe's attack was disappointing in the first half and were always kept at long range. The build ups were too slow to trouble Leatherhead's defence while there was also a good deal of inaccuracy in the passing.

Leatherhead, watched by Paddy Crerand, who is now manager of Northampton Town, resorted to strong arm tactics in the second half and three players were lectured by the referee. Nevertheless they succeeded in keeping Wanderers at bay until Pearson broke away to snatch the only goal of the game.

Maskell sent a long goal kick downfield. Woffinden went up but only succeeded in heading back towards his own goal. Pearson was quick to spot the opening and raced on into the box. Swannell came out but Pearson flicked the ball past him and into the net for a beautifully taken goal, his 14th of the season.

If this was expected to bring the best out of Leatherhead, the crowd were disappointed for the Tanners were unable to raise

their game against the home defence. Instead it was Wycombe who improved.

A brilliant 69th minute move deserved a goal when Paul Birdseye played a 1-2 with Pearson and then sprinted half the length of the field before driving only a foot past the far post. For the sheer effort alone, Paul deserved a better reward.

John Cooper went into the book for a foul on Pearson in the 73rd minute and Wanderers almost sewed the game up soon afterwards when Eaton and Woffinden got in a tangle inside their own penalty area. They left Pearson with half a chance and only Swannell's quick reactions prevented a second goal, the goalkeeper racing off his line to block the shot at point blank range.

Wanderers held out comfortably for the remaining minutes to give themselves a psychological victory for the visit of Leatherhead in the league later this season.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies, P. Cruse, J. Priestley, M. Hollifield, I. Pearson, H. Kettleborough, A. Horseman, Sub: D. Evans (not used).

LEATHERHEAD: J. Swannell, B. Sergeant, C. Woffinden, D. Reid, R. Eaton, W. Smith, J. Cooper, J. Bailey, C. Kelly, J. Baker, J. Doyle, Sub D. Wells (not used).

Referee: G. Prevett (New Malden).
Half-time: 0-0 Goalscorer, Wycombe Pearson (58).
Attendance: 1,250.